

The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS



The Belli Building

A San Francisco treasure, owned by Landmarks Board member Nancy Ho-Belli, falls into decay.

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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Cover: The Belli Building as of November 2001, photo by Morton Beebe. See story on page 22.



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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Gerry Crowley

North Beach and Telegraph Hill were prominently featured in The Department of Public Works' District 3 Eco-Blitz in August. Standing alongside Mayor Willie Brown and Supervisor Aaron Peskin in Washington Square on a Saturday morning, I was thrilled to see a couple of hundred volunteers set about the task of cleaning our neighborhood. Jan Holloway, chair of the Neighborhood Beautification Committee, played a key role in the planning process. Trees were trimmed, brush was removed, parks were refurbished, sidewalks were steam cleaned, graffiti



was removed and streets were swept. Some results were barely noticeable, but important, such as the removal of minor graffiti and the replacement of two wooden slats on a bench at Jack Early Park.

DPW, the Fisherman's Wharf Merchants

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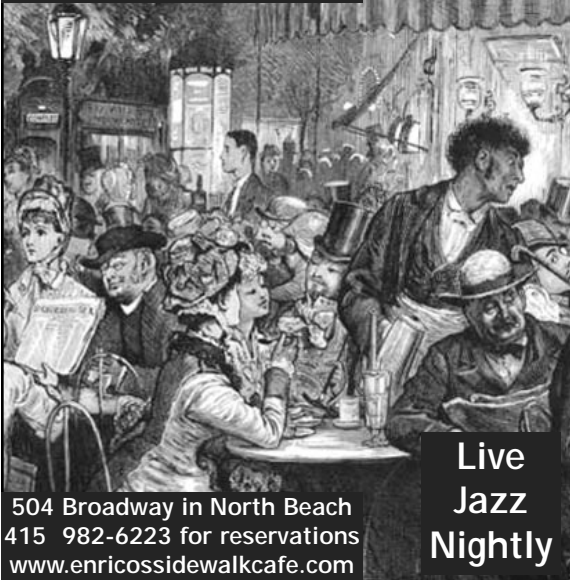


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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

continued from page 3

Association, and Supervisor Aaron Peskin held an October press conference to announce a major program to clean and maintain the Wharf, North Beach, and Chinatown since our part of San Francisco is vital to the tourism industry. Yes, Telegraph Hill Dwellers will be a key player in this effort.

Speaking of Jack Early Park, I am trying to locate the original plans for the park. After Jack died, during a realtor's open house at his former residence, the real estate sales person gave those plans to a woman, name unknown, who lives on Telegraph Hill. Can anyone help identify that woman? A landscape architectural firm is seeking the plans as they work with the Telegraph Terrace owners to rehabilitate Jack Early Park.

On September 8th, we were at last able to celebrate the dedication of Pioneer Park, 5 years and 10 months after the project was launched. Over 300 of us listened to speeches, heard the band, enjoyed the singing of our national anthem by THD member Wilma Pang, and sipped a glass of champagne, but the highlight of the event was locating our names on the step riser tiles, which we had purchased so long ago as a Step into History. In addition to the new stairways and pathways, we are now enjoying better lighting and irrigation, compliant access for the disabled, hillside protection, a new south lawn, improved pedestrian circulation, and additional views.

Although the Pioneer Park Committee is taking a well-deserved breather, you will soon observe increased efforts to reforest the park with new plantings which emphasize native plants and shrubs. If you can help, call 552-

7754 for information on Second Saturday morning work parties.

Cocktail parties at the San Francisco Art Institute and the new Park View Room at the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club bolstered our spirits this fall as we coped with the disaster that struck the United States on September 11th and terrorists robbed us of all that we have taken for granted for so long. By attending these events, our members demonstrated not only the sense of friendship and community within the Telegraph Hill Dwellers family, but also the need to move on. With the holidays upon us, my wish is for us all to have a peaceful season surrounded by those dearest to us.

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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

Nancy Shanahan of Planning and Zoning is taking a well-earned vacation. Her report will return in our next issue.

Check out specials offered by *The Semaphore* advertisers for the holidays. More information can be found in our ads. As always, *The Semaphore* encourages you to shop locally to support the merchants whose businesses make our neighborhood unique.

Fog Hill Market will be open Christmas and New Year's Day. **The Simple Organizer** offers one free hour for every four hours booked. **La Raccolta** has pan dulce from Florence, panettone and frutta candita from Genoa, and frutta martorana (marzapane) from Sicily. Mention their *Semaphore* ad and receive one free tossed salad with the purchase of any pizza (pick-up or delivery) from **North Beach Pizza**. One per customer; offer expires December 31. **O'Reilly's** features a festive Irish setting for Santa's visits, beginning about December 11. Starting at 4:00 on Christmas Eve and continu-

ing through Christmas Day, they will serve a candlelit dinner, accompanied by caroling and other holiday music. DJ Amber Lee will bring in the New Year in a disco affair with good cheer, dancing, and party favors. **The Cannery** has holiday performances by the California Revels, an afternoon storytelling program, live jazz performances and various theater and dance performances, all free of charge and open to the public. For a complete calendar of events, visit their website at www.thecannery.com. **Julius' Castle**, the scene of the lovely Christmas party given for THD every year, has a Christmas menu for \$49 and a New Year's Eve special: early seating, \$75, and late seating \$100. **Handyman Sean O'Donnell** says that although he has no specials for the holidays, his work is special throughout the year. And, finally, **Sheila Black** (Dr. Sheila-Claus) reminds us that this is

definitely not the year for bah-humbuggers and holiday cynics. Of course, she touts the idea of looking at what is wrong with our lives, so we can change what isn't working, but that doesn't preclude strongly believing in the healing effect of magic moments. So, let's pay more attention to those, this season. They will be there, if we're looking. She promised.

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Pioneer Park is Celebrated

By Julie Christensen

After six years, dozens of community meetings and civic hearings, thousands of hours of planning and fundraising, and nearly \$2 million in construction and management expenditures, the new stairs, terraces, and paths at Pioneer Park were opened to the public on Saturday, September 8, 2001.

The celebration began with great noise and color as lion dancers wound their way throughout the park and the Golden Gate Park Band launched into a patriotic repertoire. Wilma Pang opened the program with "The Star Spangled Banner." Project members reflected on the importance of our public spaces and of civic involvement and thanked the many donors and City employees who contributed to the successful completion of the built work. Wade Crowfoot represented Supervisor Aaron Peskin in awarding City commendations to the project leaders.

Recreation and Park General Manager Elizabeth Goldstein and Department of Public Works Director Edwin Lee were joined on the dais by Mayor Willie Brown, who arrived aboard a vintage San Francisco fire truck with Fire Chief Mario Treviño and Lillie Coit look-alike Donna Ewald Huggins. Mr. Robert Kearns, son of major donor Dr. Louis Kearns of Coit Services, helped

Mayor Brown, Supervisor Mark Leno, Chief Treviño, "Lillie," and project team members unveil the new plaque at the base of Coit Tower. Lots of donors were on hand, searching the new stairs for their namesake tiles. It was a beautiful day and many neighbors and friends turned out to help mark the occasion.

The successful replanting of the park is the project's current focus. Volunteers will continue working with gardener Richard Bach on the second Saturday of each month, from 9:00 to noon. There has been talk of raising additional funds for a "history walk" around the north edge of the parking area. Project members think that's a great idea—after they catch a breath.

Thanks so much to all of you who have been so generous and supportive of this undertaking. Its completion is a great tribute to the determination and resourcefulness of our hill!

For more photos of the celebration, please see pages 16-17.



The Mayor and neighbors dedicate Pioneer Park.

Photo by Dawne Bernhardt

The Homeless Get a Helping Hand

By Gail Switzer

In response to an ad for volunteers in last spring's *Semaphore*, I contacted North Beach Citizens (NBC), a drop-in center for the homeless. I wanted to learn more about the homeless in our neighborhood, who they are, and what they want and need.

NBC, at 720 Columbus, opened in January 2001. Since then, they've served 77 homeless persons from North Beach, whom they call members. They've helped 11 of these to find housing and 2 to enter other programs. Of the remainder, some are no longer active at the center, some have left the area, and unfortunately, one member has died. At any given time, they maintain a membership of approximately 50.

I hang out there one afternoon a week. As

continued on next page



North Beach Citizens clients Barbara and Jitter Bug.



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Homeless Get a Helping Hand *continued from previous page*

I talk to people in the neighborhood about my experiences, I find they know little about NBC. Some don't know it exists. I decided that the best people to tell you about NBC are its members so I interviewed a half dozen of them one afternoon. The depth of the feelings they expressed surprised me.

"If not for this place, we'd have nothing" was a common theme. Members are proud that only those who are from North Beach can belong to NBC. The photo ID they receive as a member helps them in looking for a job, managing their affairs, or answering to police in the neighborhood. It is important to them that they have an address in a respectable location. NBC

also gives them a telephone number and voice-mail where they can receive personal phone calls. Members emphasize that NBC helps only those who want to help themselves.

"We don't have to be dirty" is a response echoed by many members. NBC provides them with laundry tokens and some members have shower privileges at the North Beach Pool once a week. Still, they want better access to showers and toilets. NBC sometimes has tokens available for them for the public toilet at Washington Square but the toilet at the center is not available to the members.

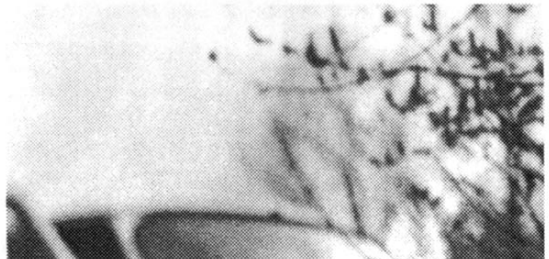
They think of NBC as their "family." It's a place where they can sit down and talk to each



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Homeless Get a Helping Hand

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other, where there is no stereotyping, no prejudice. They visit with each other every day and look out for each other. If one of them doesn't show up, the others will find out why. They told me that loneliness is an issue for the homeless and NBC helps with that. They emphasize, with pride, that this center and neighborhood are different from "downtown and other neighborhoods and places." They see it as a place to get away from violence and crime. Many homeless have trouble trusting people, both because of trauma in their family lives as well as events on the street. Having the community at NBC has helped many of them get close to others. "We learn to trust people here," they said.

"Jitterbug," an NBC member, is writing a book about being homeless in North Beach. He

sem. a. phore

Definition: To convey information using visual signals, such as flags, lights and mechanical arms.

In the last century, Telegraph Hill was a lookout spot. A man stood at the top and watched for ships arriving through the Golden Gate. He used semaphore signals to spell out ships' names to the people below who were waiting for goods and mail. Neighbors who formed Telegraph Hill Dwellers in 1954 named their newsletter to salute this early use of the Hill.

How You Can Help

The next time a homeless person asks you for change, give it to him or her—with Community Coupons. Community Coupons may be purchased for a dollar a coupon and given out to homeless individuals in the North Beach area in lieu of money. To ensure your financial help remains within the community, coupons may be exchanged for cash and services only by those enrolled with North Beach Citizens. Participants receive one-half of the value of the coupon; the other half supports the North Beach Citizens program. You can purchase Community Coupons at the NBC office at 720 Columbus Avenue or on-line at www.northbeachcitizens.org.

and other homeless want our neighborhood residents and visitors to stop stereotyping them as being drug users and thieves. While some homeless do these things, many don't and feel victimized by the stereotypes. One thing is for sure; no one does any of those things while at NBC. The rules of behavior for the center are strict and members are suspended for breaking them.

Racial prejudice and criminal records make finding work very difficult for some. "People



Homeless Get a Helping Hand *continued from previous page*

don't give you a chance," they said. Stories vary greatly but all agree that the line between being homeless or not is very thin and often issues in their personal history prevent them from getting jobs or being able to afford housing. Not all homeless are unemployed. "Soap" has held the same part-time job for seven years. When he and his wife divorced four years ago, the judge gave their house to his wife. He can't afford housing on his salary. With NBC's help, he is applying for disability Social Security benefits. This could give him enough money to find housing.

NBC provides a network that has helped many of its members to find jobs. The next step is to develop an employment program. They are currently working with DPW on a grant to set up a job training project in which members will

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keep several of the streets in our neighborhood clean.

Charee Lord, the Executive Director and the only staff person, is responsible for the warmth and acceptance that is so important to the members. Stop by, visit, and get to know Charee and the members of NBC.



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Over the Backyard Fence

Hill Dwellers send greetings to **Bob Mathews**, now a priest at St. Barnabas Catholic Church in Alameda, but still a loyal member of THD and an avid reader of *The Semaphore*. Bob says he loves his new calling. . . . Mayor Brown has appointed THD member **Mike DeNunzio** to the San Francisco County Commission on the Aging and Adult Services. . . . Unsung heroines are **Nancy Shanahan**, THD Planning and Zoning chair, who spends probably more time on THD matters than her real job, writing

beautifully detailed letters to the Planning Department on behalf of the neighborhood, and **Nan Roth**, a treasure trove of planning and zoning knowledge, who represents THD on the North East Waterfront Advisory Group. . . . **Audrey Tomaselli** returned to her roots in October. She visited her grandfather's native village in Italy, a tiny hamlet located in the mountains around Naples. . . . **Louis Silcox** reports he is working on restoring the Greenwich Steps garden. . . . Giants pitcher **Shawn Estes** has moved to the Hill.

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WE REMEMBER Frances Farruggia

By Gerry Crowley

Frances Farruggia, a longtime THD member, died on her 88th birthday, August 21st. She was very active in Sts. Peter and Paul Parish and North Beach Senior Citizens. She was also a former participant on the THD Social Committee. Everyone who knew her remarked about her impeccable grooming and sense of style. Frances was a goodwill ambassador on the 39 Coit bus, which she rode daily. She was a friend and neighbor who resided at 336 Lombard and represented the Italian heritage of the Hill and North Beach. She will be missed by the neighborhood and especially by her son, Charles.

From the Desk of Supervisor Peskin

By Supervisor Aaron Peskin

It's been a year since I was elected and took office at the advent of district elections, thanks in large part to the strong support from many of you. I deeply appreciated that support, and continue to appreciate your ongoing patience and involvement as I've navigated City Hall over the past twelve months.



My time in office has provided me a remarkable education in local politics. I arrived at City Hall with experience in neighborhood-oriented issues and a vision of planning and ethics reform needed for our City. While I have pressed forward with this agenda, I have become focused on much more—from allocating the City's \$5.2 billion budget as a member of the Board's Finance Committee to working toward making the City's 52 departments more efficient and responsive. It's quite a task, but one I increasingly feel comfortable with.

On planning issues, I think the Board has made good progress. Simply having a Board of Supervisors that is sympathetic to the concerns of neighborhoods sitting as the appellate body to the Planning Commission has greatly increased the level of attention that the Planning Department gives to neighborhood concerns on local projects. The Board has also provided increased resources for long-range land-use planning and has attached accountability measures to ensure that this planning is responsive to public input. I also have introduced a range of legislation to make the planning process more understandable and accountable to those affected by planning decisions.

Of course, while some things have changed

with the political sea-change of last year, much remains the same. Most symbolic of our continuing struggle with "business as usual" was the debacle of the selection process for Piers 27-31 development. As many Hill Dwellers know too well, this selection process resembled a political bidding war instead of a reasoned, policy-oriented dialogue about what would be most appropriate at those piers. However, even as processes like that unfold, there is hope. The Piers 27-31 project being negotiated by the Port still must be approved by the Board of Supervisors, and I can assure you that the hurdles that the Mills/YMCA project must clear in City Hall will be policy-based and not controlled by political strong-arming.

Despite such disagreements among local leaders, the events of the past two months have transformed the discourse in City Hall. While the political issues that have defined the last several years remain, issues such as public safety, economic development, and job retention have gained new urgency.

During his October State of the City address, the mayor asked my office to carry the ball on enhancing the 911 emergency response system. It's no secret that the mayor and I have our differences. However, we clearly share a commitment to work together on several issues that transcend local politics. As a result, our office is working on optimizing staffing for the city's emergency response system. Of course, we're also focused on economic development in reaction to current challenges, particularly strengthening the city's tourism industry, which is based in District 3. This effort will also benefit local residents, as demonstrated by two new programs designed to keep local streets cleaner

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SUPERVISOR PESKIN'S REPORT *continued*

for residents and tourists alike.

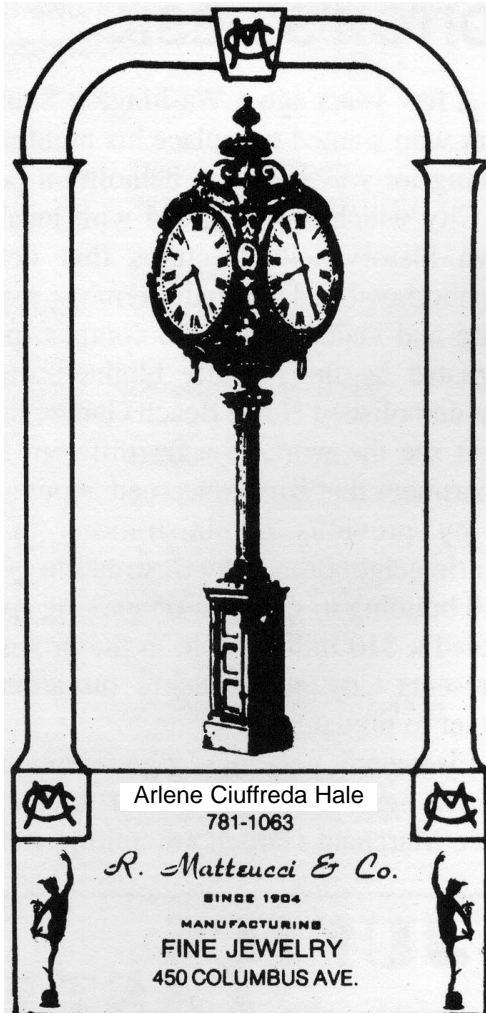
While the citywide political issues that grip City Hall come and go, what remains are the tangible quality-of-life issues in our own neighborhood. In the seven town hall meetings that my office has held since January, issues that local residents raise almost exclusively revolve around traffic, parking, local development projects, and parks. I'm glad to report that my office spends a great deal of our time resolving such issues. As I reported in the last *Semaphore*, we allocated significant budget resources towards

meeting these needs, increasing parking and traffic enforcement in the evening hours, planning for pedestrian crosswalks at busy intersections in the neighborhoods, and allocating extra personnel to maintain District 3 parks.

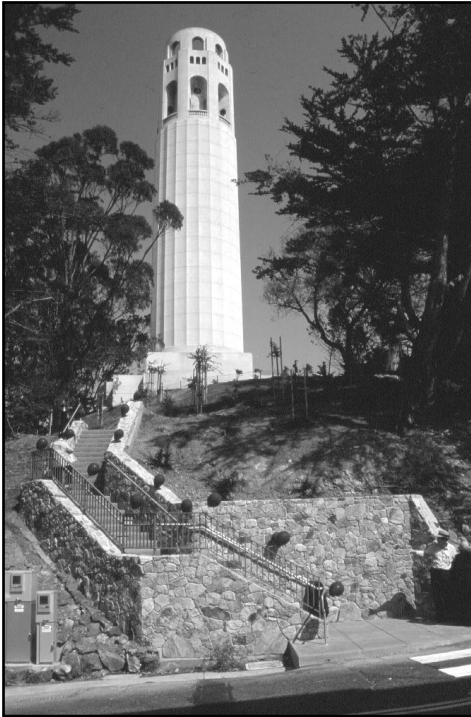
As always, please get in touch with my office as questions or concerns arise. If you'd like an expanded explanation of this short recap of the last year, please call my office at 554-7450 or send an e-mail to aaron_peskin@ci.sf.ca.us. See you around the neighborhood.

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CELEBRATING



Dick Marshall and Pat Cady look for donor tiles on the Filbert Stairway.



Charles Huggins and "Lillie Hitchcock Coit" (Donna Ewald Huggins) on the new steps.

Dignitaries and neighbors enjoy a champagne toast at the new plaque.

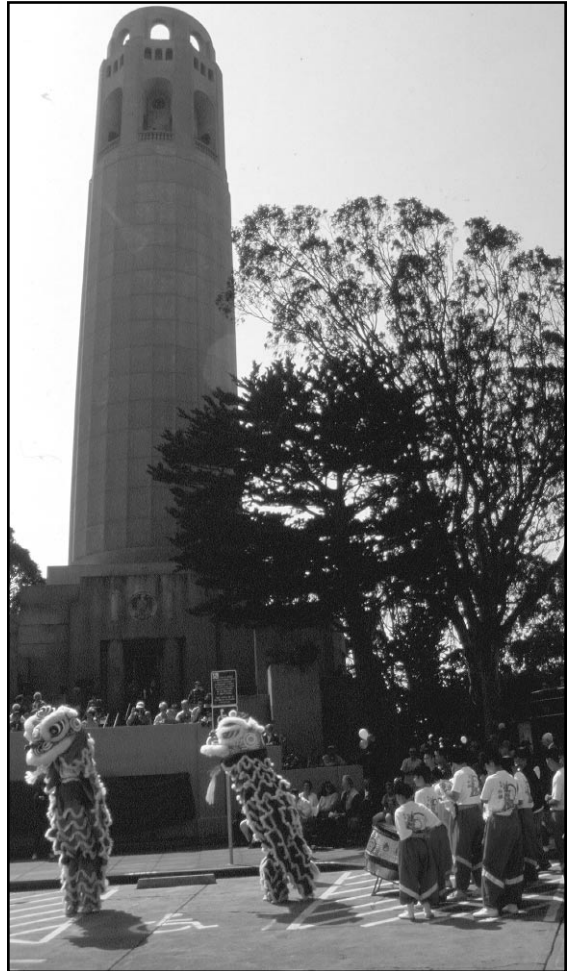


PIONEER PARK

All photos by Howard Wong



The Lion Dancers check out the new Filbert stairway.



The lions dance at Coit Tower.

THD Takes a Stand on the Presidio

By Bill Seelinger

Presidio Trust, established by Congress via the Presidio Trust Act of 1996, last summer issued an aggressive draft Presidio Trust Implementation Plan (PTIP). It lays out the Trust Board's vision of how the Board would change the Presidio, sponsor extensive activities, and enable financial self-sufficiency by 2013 -- the last of which is required by the Act. The final public comment period for the PTIP ended October 25, at which time the Telegraph Hill Dwellers submitted a formal comment..

The formal comment stated that THD was "significantly concerned" with a number of the PTIP aspects. The concerns focused on THD's feeling that the Presidio should be "a national park," not something else, emphasizing that the Trust should enhance "its uniquely stunning beauty" and preserve "its significance as a military post to the history of our city and our country" and do "little else."

THD commented that any Trust-sponsored activities, "with the exception of an occasional celebration or parade (that require no changes to physical facilities), should be restricted to subjects related directly to the Presidio, designed to enhance the visitor's experience. The Trust wasn't commissioned to establish schools, museums, theatres, libraries, or recreational facilities." Any displays should be "directly related to the Presidio itself, such as . . . the various plant species found in the Presidio, the effects of wave-and-tide action on the Presidio shoreline, or the

benefits of marshland to wildlife."

As to facilities, "No new buildings should be built, with the exception of replacing those that are truly undistinguished, such as the Wherry Housing units, and are relatively out of sight. Refurbish the historical buildings." THD commented that as for Crissy Field—on or near which the Trust seems to want to build several buildings—this should not be done and it should "use available land to expand the marshland instead."

Acknowledging the reality that several thousand people live permanently at the Presidio, THD stated that it was "in favor of limited transient lodging, so long as it is provided in existing buildings," reflecting that "many visitors would undoubtedly get a thrill out of 'living' at the Presidio for a week or so as visitors."

There has been much financial figuring by various citizens groups, environmental groups, and others, that shows that the Presidio, on its present course and speed of refurbishing and renting existing residential-and-commercial buildings, can be self-sufficient by 2013 without the PTIP's very ambitious construction program. THD's comment was that "it appears to us that you want to build buildings and other facilities that you shouldn't build — in order to generate revenues to finance the sponsorship of activities that you shouldn't sponsor. We don't want you to try to 'make a difference' in our lives; we just want you to preserve and enhance America's wonderful Presidio as a glorious

national park.”

On the already signed Lucas project, “This project is regrettable. George Lucas is an exciting personage in our society . . . [but] his facility appears to us that it will essentially have the appearance and character of the dreaded ‘office park.’ If some parts of it stand out somewhat more spectacularly than others, that part may indeed remind us of Disney World. This project is not needed for self-sufficiency, given astute, thoughtful, and minimalist management of the Presidio. Buy your way out of the contract.”

On retail proposals, “Any retail should be restricted to enhancing the visit to the Presidio of Presidio visitors, such as is done fairly well by the present Warming Hut.” THD expressed particular distress about the recently installed Republic Bank Branch: “And you put it right on the main square of the Main Post.” THD pointed out that it filled no need, since there were a dozen or so bank branches not far outside the Presidio gates. “The Presidio is a park! The Presidio Trust seems to be moving in the direction of making the Presidio look like downtown Redwood City. That’s fine for Redwood City,

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but Redwood City is not a national park. Terminate the bank lease as soon as possible.”

THD summarized, “The PTIP, though thick, is nevertheless quite vague. We are troubled that it has the earmarks to be a potential breeding ground for taking a unique natural park that is rich in over two centuries of American history, including a large and solemn military cemetery, situated in an incomparably stunning setting, and slowly but surely turning it into the equivalent of a combination seaside resort, office park, and suburb. Our position coincides much more with the 1994 GPMA plan [a previous plan by the National Park Service] because its less-intrusive nature is more consistent with the points made above. Please use as a guideline in your deliberations the notion that, in the Presidio, less is more!”



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PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

By Suzanne Nelson

As the year comes to an end, we have had lots of variety in the social program. After the Holiday Party December 9th, we will have had 13 events since May and I certainly hope that most of you have enjoyed and participated in at least one or two of these.

September—We celebrated North Beach Art at Twilight at the lovely San Francisco Art Institute. We were able to stroll through the Institute galleries as well as having the special treat of seeing many of our own North Beach artists, who displayed their works around the fountain in the courtyard. Food and wine were set up in the Diego Rivera Gallery and looked so lovely with the generous loan of ceramics from our members at la raccolta at 521 Columbus Avenue. We were also able to sample some of their delicious antipastos. And, to make the evening complete, we enjoyed the music of our member flutist Tina Smelser and guitarist Chris Sequeira, who are also available for small parties. Many people commented how lovely it was to have several very well behaved little ones. This was a very special event of coming together after the events of September 11th.

OCTOBER—Was a very busy month starting with the Italian Heritage Parade and Luncheon. We sat right on the street at Tratorria Pinocchio, at the corner of Vallejo and Columbus, where we ate pasta, drank wine and cheered the parade participants. The response

to this event was wonderful—we even had to have another table added for us. Many asked if we can do this again next year, so look for your invitation next September to be able to join in the fun.

The Park View Room at the Italian Athletic Club was the very special setting for our New Members Cocktail Party. For most people, this was the first opportunity to experience this very special hideaway across the street from Washington Square Park. We are grateful to Franc Harriss for making this available to us and for providing such special hors d'oeuvres. This room is also available for private parties and meetings.

We ended the month by sponsoring a celebration and big block party recognizing the Landmark Designation of City Lights Booksellers & Publishers. Hundreds of people crowded in front of City Lights, where our Supervisor Aaron Peskin publicly awarded the Landmark Certificate to co-owners Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Nancy Peters. This was followed by presentations from ten local authors who shared memories, stories and several poems written for the occasion. Vesuvio Café arranged for Celebration Music by the Septeto de la Moderna, which had people dancing in the street. It was a wonderful celebration!

As of press time we will end the year with two events – a General Membership Dinner on November 12th at Caesar's Restaurant and our annual Holiday Party at Julius Castle.

If you would like to join us and be part of the Social Committee, please contact me: suzanne_nelson@yahoo.com or 986-6210. Also, if you are interested in resources for ven-

The Semaphore needs a few good men and women to do small line drawings on neighborhood subjects for space fillers. Please call 392-4081 or e-mail madartist@redosegos.com

PROGRAM AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE *continued from previous page*

ues, music, or ideas for your own private parties, I can provide names and numbers. As usual, please let me know any special interests you have for future planning. I am willing to plan events with as few as 15 participants if there is an interest. I know many of you have spoken

with me about a cooking/dinner evening and I want you to know that this is at the top of the list for 2001 – dancing too!

Happy Holidays—and I am looking forward to seeing you.

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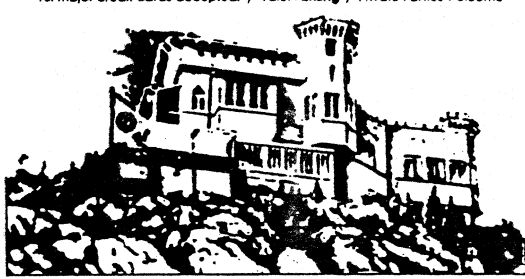
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Wanna Own the Compound?

The compound once owned by Desmond and Valetta Heslet, and described in the last issue of *The Semaphore* in an article by Mark Bittner, has come up for sale. A group of Telegraph Hill residents (including some of the compound's current tenants) are trying to buy it. The property consists of three lots on the Greenwich Steps—one (RH-3) garden lot, which we would like to keep as historic garden, and two lots with four buildings containing seven small, old, fixer-upper dwellings. It's possible to combine two units into one, making a larger living space. To learn more about the tenancy in common that is forming to purchase this historic artists' compound, please contact Judy Irving at (415) 362-2420

Can the Belli Building Be Saved?

By Steve Thomas

"This is the way the world ends,

This is the way the world ends:

Not with a bang, but a whimper."

—T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

Juxtaposed next to those recent television images of gigantic collapse in lower Manhattan, the devastation on Montgomery Street appears, in contrast, somewhat benign. In its own way, however, the whimpering collapse of the Belli building, which is roofless as another rainy season begins, is, indeed, devastating.

"Not only is it the oldest commercial building in San Francisco, but during its rich history as one of the city's original live/work spaces for artists, it was home to more than 70 painters, sculptors, designers, photographers and writers from 1880 to 1959," said local historian Bill Kostura.

Is this your last Semaphore?

If the mailing label is dated Feb. 1, 2002 or earlier, your membership has lapsed and we hope you'll rectify that situation with a check. If you think our records are incorrect or you are in doubt about your membership status, please contact Membership Chair, Tom Noyes
Phone 981-8520
E-mail tom@noyesfamily.com

"From Jules Tavernier to Maynard Dixon and Dorothea Lange and even Oscar Wilde, the place was an artists' magnet," he continued. "Ralph Stackpole, for example, carved the gigantic sculptures which stand outside the Pacific Stock Exchange."

The two buildings, at 722-728 Montgomery Street, currently owned by Landmarks Board member Nancy Ho-Belli, appear to be undergoing what might be considered "constructive" demolition. Kostura calls it demolition by neglect.

According to Kostura, this probably wasn't what Melvin Belli had in mind when he acquired the property in 1959, since there is evidence that he was promoting the building as a rich, historical gem when he removed the stucco from the face of 726-728 Montgomery Street, planed down the belt course, and converted two entrances into windows.

The rich history of the Belli building probably begins in 1851, right after the last of several

BELLI BUILDING *continued from previous page*

large fires that devastated the nascent financial district, which, at that time, extended north along Montgomery all the way to the Sherman Bank, now the site of the William Stout Architectural Books bookstore.

Joseph Genella completed the 726-728 building prior to 1856, when he began advertising his business in a San Francisco directory. Genella was an importer and dealer in crockery, Bohemian, French and American glassware, fine table cutlery, plated and Britannia ware, lamps, chandeliers, and girandoles (a girandole being a wall-mounted candle chandelier, usual-

ly with a mirror). In the early 1860s, his brother, Caesar Genella, completed Caesar's annex, 722-724.

The upper floors were used at various times as doctors' offices, complete with Russian and Turkish baths, an Odd Fellows Hall, offices for auction and commission merchants, headquarters for a number of Nevada mining companies and even one of the many ethnic newspapers common in San Francisco throughout the century, *La Voz de Chile*.

According to the 1937 memoir by Isobel Field, *This Life I've Loved*, the building became an

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As almost everyone who has lived on Telegraph Hill for long knows, *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill* by David Myrick is a collector's item. The out-of-print first edition of this book, lovingly detailing the colorful history of the Hill, sells for \$200 these days.

Last year, David agreed to make revisions to the original, and THD agreed to sponsor the second edition of the Myrick book. The new volume includes 32 new pages and 50 more photographs.

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BELLI BUILDING *continued from previous page*

artists' colony right after the discovery that several offices—converted for a ten-year stint into city courtrooms—were a perfect large, open interior for a salon. From 1877 to 1880, the courtrooms had handled the spill-over of litigious action from both the nearby City Hall (which was where the Holiday Inn now stands), and the police house and city jail up the street on Broadway.

"It was once a court room," wrote Field, "and the hardwood floor might be a little uneven, but it was solidly built, and needed only a sprinkling of powdered wax to be excellent for dancing." According to Field, in 1880, Joe and Jules Tavernier transformed the courtroom into a studio complete with a piano and Venetian

curtains, rich brocades, a collection of Indian relics, and, after ransacking Chinatown, a trove of brilliant silk costumes, masks, head-dresses, chests, carved ivory boxes, fans and colored prints. They hung several of their own paintings and sketches on the walls.

"The most successful party we ever gave at the studio was in honor of Oscar Wilde," wrote Field, about what turned out to be the several week stay of the poet-playwright. Now the only remaining Oscar Wilde site in San Francisco has come close to caving onto the sidewalks of Montgomery Street.

Today, nearby business owners and Telegraph Hill neighbors wonder aloud if this roofless building will survive another winter.

City Attorney Sues to Save Belli Building

On April 23, 2001, after years of complaints from many respected San Franciscans, including the City's preeminent preservation organization, San Francisco Architectural Heritage, Jackson Square merchants and the Telegraph Hill Dwellers, the City Attorney filed a lawsuit against the building's owner, Landmarks Board member Nancy Ho-Belli. Despite repeated Orders of Abatement and Notices of Violation issued by the City's Department of Building Inspection, Ho-Belli, appointed by Mayor Brown to the Landmarks Board (charged, ironically, with protecting the City's historic resources), has been sued for violating the City's Building and Planning Codes and the State's Civil and Business and Professions Codes by failing to maintain her landmark structures and creating a public nuisance. The City Attorney is asking the court to order Ho-Belli to repair and restore the building expeditiously. Unfortunately, it now seems that Ho-Belli remains intent on litigating the matter while the building continues to deteriorate through yet another winter. Given the egregious facts of the case and Ho-Belli's continued stonewalling while the building gets precipitously close to collapse, Supervisor Peskin authored a Board of Supervisors' resolution calling for the Mayor to remove her from the Landmarks Board and urging the District Attorney to consider filing additional charges. Stay tuned for further developments in the effort to ensure that these historic treasures are finally repaired and restored.

Phoenix Rising

By Mark Bittner

Telegraph Hill is more than a place; it's a community. Sometimes the community comes together and moves in swift and unexpected ways. Take the story of Phoenix.

On October 22, lifelong hill resident Bea Taggi found one of the wild parrots unconscious on the ground. She told her neighbor, Sally Gould, about the parrot, and Sally, knowing that I was somewhere in the neighborhood, tried to locate me. She called Bill Seelinger, who remembered an article by Judy Irving in the previous *Semaphore* that invited Hill Dwellers to her office to see footage from the parrot documentary. Bill hurried down the hill and found Judy and me working on the film. He called Sally, but it was too late; the parrot was dead. An hour or so later, Bea and Sally showed up at the office with the parrot. It was a baby, and it wasn't dead after all.

FROM MY DIARY:

OCTOBER 22, 2001: The baby's feet are all curled up. She opens her eyes and is friendly. I think she hit a window. I'll release her if I can. Sweet baby.

OCTOBER 23, 2001: Judy has named her Phoenix. Her feet are flat today and she can stand. She's slow and sleeps a lot. Her head tilts upward a lot. I fed her some baby bird formula. She's bony. She's unafraid of Judy and me. She made some baby noises.

OCTOBER 24, 2001: She's walking a little. Loves being held. I need to get more food in her. I have her on my desk and the flock is in the Monterey cypress. She's calling out to them weakly. I did a late morning flock feeding. I took Phoenix out in her cage and hung it near the dish. No one claimed her.

OCTOBER 25, 2001: Judy is falling in love with her. Phoenix has vision problems. Her pupils are badly dilated. She missed food I was handing her by an inch or more. By the end of the day she did better. I had her in her cage near my computer with the door open and she crawled to the entrance and

continued on next page

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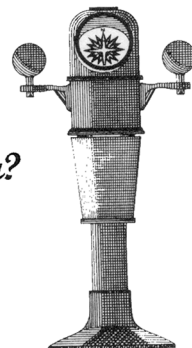
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THD Does the Columbus Parade



The section reserved for Dwellers overflowed, making the Columbus Day parade gathering one of the year's most successful events.

Bill Alvarado, Marshall and Maxine Schulman, Jan Holloway (right); Nan and Nate Roth, and Maurice Holloway (left) sip and nibble.

Photos by Suzanne Nelson



Phoenix Rising *continued*

jumped onto my lap. Very funny. She's quite devoted to both of us. Judy fed her apple for a long time.
OCTOBER 26, 2001: She tried to fly and failed. She's getting a little independent. Wants to wander off more. She eats on her own, but likes being fed. I fed the flock and took her out with me, but again no one claimed her. She is adorable.
OCTOBER 27, 2001: She's eating constantly now. Holds her head normally.
OCTOBER 28, 2001: She's a little bit feisty. She craves food. I wonder if she's an orphan. Maybe she didn't hit a window; maybe no one was feeding her. She was so skinny. She doesn't seem to have any illness.
OCTOBER 29, 2001: This morning she leaped off the dresser to the floor and I saw a trace of flight. Later she crawled onto a perch briefly. First time.
TO BE CONTINUED.

The Shrink Is In

By Sheila Tobin Black, Ph.D.

We are told 'tis the season to reinvigorate our buffeted economy by jingling those cash register bells ("Get out there and shop!"), despite our wobbly markets and financial insecurities. We are told to lead normal lives with a thinly disguised veil of hypervigilance and a whole mess of courage in the face of what we can't see or touch or understand (read: bravado).

Whew, those are contradictory directions for which Freud and Jung (not to mention our mothers) seem to have left us ill prepared. So let's talk about simpler subjects we can get our arms around like, you know, relationships and people. Simple stuff.

Want to become intimate with someone you hardly know? Get unstuck in a relationship that is going nowhere, fast? Re-establish a duet gone sour and you were never sure why? I'm no Santa Claus, but I do know that this annual time of supposed sharing and wonder often gives way to the kind of frenzy and loneliness that sends people to an emotional North Pole. So, if you're interested in getting closer to someone, let me wedge a relational how-to message right into the middle of your "normal" thoughts of mistletoe and ho-ho-ho.

For us human types, connection is what happens in a good relationship when there is emotional movement toward each other. When there is authentic give and take, both people are unwittingly engaging in a process of personal healing, healing from feeling alone, even in an animated, two-way conversation . . . even when the talkers love each other.

By authentic, I mean honest, not just shoot-from-the-hip candid—honest involving thought

and feeling. When you speak your heart and mind, and someone is really listening, chances are you will discover that something terrifically empowering occurs: a sense of union. There is a feeling of connection between you and another person and a "we" is born, even if only for a few minutes. Spiritually, it's electrifying. Physically, it feels like a warm bath after a long hike on a cold day. The key to this kind of growth-fostering relationship is what Dr. Jean Baker Miller at the Stone Center of Wellesley College calls mutual empathy, or sort of two-way feeling-thoughts. Now, don't wander off, it's quite simple when you think about it (yeah . . . you gotta' do that).

How we humans judge ourselves to be worthwhile is very often determined by how others respond to us. Empathy, then, is an awareness and understanding of the emotions and feelings of another person—kind of an evolved sister of sympathy, which is similar, but limited to pain and sadness, rather than the whole slew of emotions we carry around, waiting to be recognized. For instance, when someone with a poker face is telling you something and you get his or her inner delight on a gut level, you can't help smiling. When you do, you are mirroring that person's inner emotions, without specific directions. You have demonstrated your ability to feel with the other person's experience because you are really paying attention.

Mutuality is when you can both accomplish the above, and that creates an amazing sense of real empowerment—not a zero sum game of power where, if I have more, you have less, but where each person becomes stronger, more connected, and more fulfilled. You both get credit, you both deserve it, and you both feel great. Get it? Never fear if you're not 100% clear because

The Shrink is In *continued*

there's no test, except your own, and it's easier by far than some other messages we're getting on how to conduct our lives. Besides, it's a fairly radical concept that could change the way people are with each other, especially those you want to keep around.

So, if you can't quite hold on to the finer points of the message, try to keep two words in your mind as you stand around dusting your eggnog with nutmeg. As E. M. Forster commanded: "Only connect!" Then, go out and pay close attention to whomever you are talking with next, if you care what they're saying. Respond to them with your heart and mind, and watch for the miracle.

Now, I'm not for a second suggesting that this sort of relational effort could work between governments. For instance, it might not be better than bombs and threats of financial/cultural/religious/physical control, one over the other, not to mention the possibility of complete annihilation, but, who knows. It could be worth a shot. After all, I think governments are made up of people, yes?

Until we figure out how to act, remember that tomorrow is still another day, and, figuratively speaking, where there is life there sure-as-shootin' is hope. In the meantime, Happy Holidays.

When Dr. Black is not dreaming of sugarplums, she is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice in San Francisco. Please call her at 415-398-8969 with comments and questions, or to pursue personal change.

CHINESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OPENS

The Chinese American National Museum and Learning Center opened on November 17 in the Chinatown YWCA building at 965 Clay Street. The first of its kind in the United States, the museum celebrates the contributions made by Chinese Americans through artifacts, photographs and immigration documents tracing the history of Chinese in America.

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THD Board Resolutions

August

The Board agreed to submit a ballot argument in support of Proposition D, a measure requiring voter approval at the next regularly scheduled election of city projects necessitating 100 acres of bay fill.

September

The Board agreed to support, in concept, plans to create the International Museum of

Women, an educational and cultural facility to be located on Pier 26, which would be devoted to historic and cultural issues related to women.

The Board agreed to request the Department of Parking and Traffic to locate stop signs at the east and west corners of Greenwich and Grant.

October

None.



Help Us Save Money!

In addition to your quarterly issue of *The Semaphore*, all members are informed about THD events either by email or postcard. However, every membership that provides an email address saves THD about \$3 or more a year in postage. As a bonus, we are able to inform you of other non-THD local events which you may find interesting.

If you have an email address but are still receiving social and other event notices by postcard, we encourage you to provide THD with your email address. You can do so easily by emailing Tom Noyes, our Membership Chair, directly at tom@noyesfamily.com.

THD Welcomes New Members

New THD Members, August 2001 to October 2001

San Francisco Art Institute, Dianne Halman & Howard Becker, Charles Belle, B. Crosby Byers, Anita Chawla, Teri Behm & John Clawson, Chalernporn Phanthong & Chris Foley, Elizabeth Candlish & Philip Ingalls, John Parnell & Dr. Leonard Kirchdoerfer, Alan Kuhn, Michael Leonard, Tom Martin, Neil & Cynthia Musante, Gregory Nicola, Isadore & Marilyn Pivnick, Elliott Robbins, Robin Sparks, and Ann Whittall.

For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

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THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Parking and Transportation. Chair, Bill Seelinger, 392-8450. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

Planning and Zoning. Chair Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

Semaphore. Editor Cheryl Bentley, 392-4081. The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

Program. Chair Suzanne Nelson, 986-6210. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

Budget. Maya Armour, 986-1474. As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

Membership. Chair Tom Noyes, 981-8520. As prescribed in bylaws for Financial Secretary.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

Parks and Trees. Chair Julie Christensen, 552-7774. email julie@surfaces.com. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

Neighborhood Beautification Jan Holloway, 398-2055. Creates opportunities to improve, beautify, and preserve the Hill. Through its awards program, recognizes individuals and businesses who enhance our neighborhood. Facilitates cleanup, gardening and graffiti removal.

Oral History Project Chair Art Peterson. 956-7817. Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

Pioneer Park Improvement Project. Chair Howard Wong, 982-5055. Work party volunteers enhance the open space around Coit Tower, improving accessibility and safety through planning, landscaping work parties and fundraising.

THD Web Page. Webmaster Peter Overmire, 989-3945. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. Representative Gerry Crowley, 781-4201. City-wide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

N.E.R.T. June Fraps, 392-1187. Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

WEB SITE =
www.thd.org

That's Us! Pete Overmire (989-3945), a longtime THDer and former officer has set up this site for Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Access it to see the sensational look he has created, impressive to local and international browsers alike. Lend him photographs and graphics relevant to the Hill that he can scan in. Call or e-mail information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between Semaphores.

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T H D C A L E N D A R

2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties, December 8th, January 12, February 9. Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774.

JANUARY

New Members Cocktail Party

FEBRUARY

General Membership Dinner

MARCH

Cocktail Party

APRIL

General Membership Dinner

Look for your invitations for exact times and locations as well as additional events.

Dates and locations subject to change.

Schedules of Committee Meetings

PLANNING & ZONING: First Thursdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070.

PARKING & TRANSPORTATION: 2nd Saturdays at 11 AM at Little City Restaurant, Union and Powell Streets.

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